



HELP WANTED

Missouri still grappling with prison guard shortage

YEARS-LONG PROBLEM
Low pay, tough working conditions have led to high employee turnover

SKYROCKETING COSTS
State corrections agency shelled out \$19 million in overtime last year

BY KURT ERICKSON
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

JEFFERSON CITY • A shortage of guards at one of Missouri’s maximum-security prisons is so dire that the Department of Corrections is busing in workers from other facilities to keep the 1,400-inmate lockup operating at safe levels.

In November, corrections of-

ficials said more than 70 officers from three northwest Missouri prisons surrounding the Cross-roads Correctional Center and the Western Missouri Correctional Center, both in Cameron, were being paid overtime rates not only for working in the facilities but for sitting on the buses for the 90-minute round trip.

“We definitely do have a staff-

ing shortage. We have about 11,000 employees throughout the state. Currently we have a shortage of more than 400 custody staff,” DOC spokeswoman Karen Pojmann said.

The shortage is not new. The buses have been running among Cameron, St. Joseph and Chillicothe for more than two years.

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Push for indoor smoking ban gains steam

ST. CHARLES COUNTY
All enclosed public places would be affected by plan driven by health groups

ST. LOUIS COUNTY
Petition backers want to close existing exemptions for many bars and casinos

BY MARK SCHLINKMANN
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Health groups have launched an initiative petition drive to put a strict countywide indoor smoking ban before St. Charles County voters in the Nov. 6 election.

Meanwhile, anti-smoking activists also may mount a petition campaign to get a public vote the same day in St. Louis County on ending exemptions in its 7-year-old ban, including those allowing smoking in casinos and many bars. A decision has yet to be made on whether to pursue that effort.

“It’s time to close the gaps in current law because everyone deserves the right to breathe smoke-free air no matter where they live, work and play,” said Karen Englert, Missouri governmental relations director for the American Heart Association.

The heart association has donated \$355,000 to the newly formed Committee for a Healthy

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HOME AWAY FROM HOME



PHOTOS BY DAVID CARSON • dcarson@post-dispatch.com

Amy Gage (foreground, right) laughs as she shares stories with a group of Washington University students over a traditional Hanukkah dinner at her home in Clayton on Friday. To the right of Gage is Risa Zwerling, the wife of Washington University Chancellor Mark Wrighton. Zwerling started the Home Plate program 15 years ago; it matches Washington University students with families who host the students for dinner a few times a year.

Washington U. program has been helping students team up with area families with common interests for the past 15 years

BY ASHLEY JOST
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

CLAYTON • It’s a little bit of faith and a lot of matchmaking, with a baseball theme.

“How St. Louis is that?” jokes Risa Zwerling, the wife of Washington University Chancellor Mark Wrighton.

Zwerling, the longtime first lady of St. Louis’ largest research institution, runs a program called Home Plate. The premise is sim-

ple: Zwerling matches groups of students with area families who are willing to host the students for dinner a few times each year. The hope is for the St. Louis-area families to become the students’ “home away from home.”

When Zwerling’s daughter was an undergraduate student at Connecticut College in the early 2000s, one of her professors invited a group of students over for

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Brian Gage, a professor of medicine at Washington University, welcomes a group of university students to his home in Clayton for dinner on Friday to give them a “home away from home.”

Mueller’s role is secure, Trump asserts

The rumors
Speculation that president may move to end investigation sets off alarm bells



President Donald Trump

BY JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON • President Donald Trump said Sunday that he was not considering firing special counsel Robert Mueller even as his administration was again forced to grapple with the growing Russia investigation that has shadowed the White House for much of Trump’s initial year in office.

Trump returned to the White House from Camp David and was asked if he would consider triggering the process to dismiss Mueller, who is investigating whether the president’s Republican campaign coordinated with Russian officials during last year’s election.

The president answered: “No, I’m not.”

But he did add to the growing conservative criticism of Mueller’s move to gain access to thousands of emails sent and received by Trump officials before the start of his administration, yielding attacks from transition lawyers

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The emails
Trump allies blast investigation’s path to accessing data, attack its credibility



Special prosecutor Robert Mueller

The GOP’s big tax gamble

THE PROMISES
Businesses will boost hiring, wages; workers will spend tax cuts on goods

THE RISKS
Economic growth may falter; inequality may deepen; debt will increase

BY HEATHER LONG,
Washington Post

Republicans are on the verge of passing a massive tax cut for businesses that is deeply unpopular with the American public. They are doing it with no Democratic votes and at a moment when the U.S. economy looks pretty healthy (typically, tax cuts are most effective when the economy is struggling and the government wants to revive it).

A surprising number of chief executives admit their top plan for the extra cash is to pay shareholders more, not grow jobs and wages. Billionaire CEO Mike Bloomberg went so far as to declare the bill a “trillion dollar blunder.” So all of this begs the obvious question: Why are Republicans doing this?

Political analysts say it’s all about the 2018 midterm elections. President Donald Trump

See TAX BILL • Page A4

INSIDE • Tax plan could bring cuts to state, local services. **A4**

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TOMORROW
61°/35°
PARTLY CLOUDY

WEATHER
B10

Clearing the air

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Cards chase big bats

Hochman asks:
Whom might Cards
give up for Machado
or Donaldson?

SPORTS • B1

Messenger: Greitens makes it hard to fill in blanks • **A2**

Along for the Ride: More I-44 bridge work to come • **A3**

Putin thanks Trump • **A8**

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